United Nations A/69/927

General Assembly

Distr.: General
16 June 2015
English
Original: French

Sixty-ninth session
Agenda item 14
Culture of peace

Letter dated 4 June 2015 from the Permanent Representative of Benin to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

At the invitation of the Government of Benin, the Symposium for the launching of the African Initiative on Education for Peace and Development through Interfaith and Intercultural Dialogue was held in Cotonou, Benin, from 26 to 28 May 2015, under the patronage of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), with the support of the United Nations, the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States, the West African Economic and Monetary Union, the Council of the Entente, the International Organization of la Francophonie and others.

The Government of Benin expresses its gratitude for the support of the United Nations system in organizing this historic meeting, inter alia, through technical support from the Office of the United Nations High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations during the preparatory intellectual process.

The Symposium participants adopted the Manifesto on Education for Peace and Development through Interfaith and Intercultural Dialogue, the full text of which I am transmitting herewith (see annex). The Manifesto is in line with the efforts of the international community to implement the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy adopted by the General Assembly on 8 September 2006 in its resolution 60/288.

The Government of Benin would highly appreciate the support the United Nations system might contribute to the implementation of the Manifesto.

Accordingly, I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly.

(*Signed*) Jean-Francis R. **Zinsou**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

15-09891 (E) 240615 240615

Please recycle

Annex to the letter dated 4 June 2015 from the Permanent Representative of Benin to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Manifesto on Education for Peace and Development through Interfaith and Intercultural Dialogue

Coming from a broad range of religious, spiritual, cultural, social, economic and political backgrounds from across Africa and around the world, upon the initiative of the Pan-African Social Prospects Centre and at the invitation of the Government of Benin, we, the participants in the Symposium for the launching of the African Initiative on Education for Peace and Development through Interfaith and Intercultural Dialogue, held in Cotonou, Benin, from 26 to 28 May 2010, under the patronage of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), with the support of the United Nations, the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the West African Economic and Monetary Union, the Council of the Entente, the International Organization of la Francophonie, and others, after asking for God's blessing and unanimously paying tribute to the memory of one of the major leaders of the continent, Mr. Jean Pliya, following fruitful discussions on the subject of the Symposium and upon the completion of our work, adopt this Manifesto.

1. United by the recognition of the dignity of every human person as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and national constitutions and as recognized by all religions and cultures as the common heritage of the wisdom of humanity;

2. Considering that peace, security, development and human rights are closely linked and mutually reinforcing;

3. Aware that the use of the violence of weapons to oppose the violence and terror spread by the proponents of political and religious extremism, even if it is legitimate, cannot be an effective and sustainable response, given the impossibility of placing a soldier behind every citizen to ensure his or her safety;

4. Convinced that education for peace and development through interfaith and intercultural dialogue has great potential for strengthening the foundations of sustainable peace and equitable development;

5. Convinced that freedom from war is an essential condition for well-being, sustainable development and the full enjoyment of human rights;

6. Rejecting the use of all forms of violence and stressing that only peaceful economic, political and sociocultural solutions can ensure a stable and democratic future for all the peoples of the world;

7. Emphasizing the need to strengthen good governance and build more open and more inclusive societies;

8. Seeking to contribute to achieving the vision of the African Union, namely, an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the globai arena;

9. Committed to cultural diversity as a source of enrichment of peoples and nations, in accordance with the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions and the Charter for the Cultural Renaissance of Africa in which African States recognize cultural diversity as a force for the mutual enrichment of peoples and nations;

10. Recognizing that peaceful coexistence among different religious and cultural communities is an invaluable asset for peace and the harmonious development of peoples, as development is another name for peace;

11. Building on the solemn affirmation in the preamble to the Constitution of UNESCO that since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed, and on the conclusions of the Pan African Forum held by UNESCO in Luanda from 26 to 28 March 2013, on the theme "Sources and resources for a culture of peace";

12. Expressing our deep appreciation for the work of the interfaith councils of the African Council of Religious Leaders — Religions for Peace, and for the initiative of the African Union Interfaith Dialogue Forum and that of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations;

13. We proclaim that respect for the dignity of others and their religious and philosophical beliefs as well as exchange and contact are the true foundations of interfaith and intercultural dialogue;

14. Underscore that the path of interfaith and intercultural dialogue must be built on the values of mutual respect, exchange and contact, which are non-negotiable prerequisites for "living together", consisting of a "common desire to live together" in diversity, particularly diversity of religions, spiritual beliefs, cultures, and political and social preferences, as seen in the pluralistic, resilient and peaceful practices observed on the African continent and in its diaspora;

15. Stress the utmost importance of the right to scientific progress, the right to mutual and inclusive development, and education for peace as a tool to promote the realization of peoples' right to peace, and urge States and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to participate actively in this effort;

16. Propose, as an alternative to the use of force, the promotion of education for peace and development through interfaith and intercultural dialogue at the level of the family unit by increasing the involvement of women and youth;

17. Condemn the warmongers and arms dealers and all forms of domination, exclusion, and religious, spiritual, cultural, political or social discrimination, which, under the false pretext of defending freedom or religion, are attempts to wield power by force, causing injustices that at times give birth to despair and violent extremism;

18. Call for improved governance of information and communications technologies and social media so that they are instruments of reconciliation among peoples and so that their use, as should be the case with print media, contributes to awareness-raising and the education of people, especially young people, in this sensitive area;

19. Strongly advocate for establishing and implementing a national policy of peace through dialogue to act together, through the design, planning and

management of development projects that broadly involve religious and cultural sensitivities at all levels;

20. Strongly recommend the establishment of a continental network of African parliamentarians for peace through interfaith and intercultural dialogue, with the goal, inter alia, of ensuring that the budget for each State provides for ongoing and consistent funding to support development activities designed and implemented jointly as part of an active interfaith and intercultural dialogue;

21. Propose the establishment of a network of African women for education for peace and development through interfaith and intercultural dialogue;

22. Call on all States to integrate education for peace and development through interfaith and intercultural dialogue in all educational programmes and formal and informal training;

23. Urge all international and African organizations to include education for peace and development through interfaith and intercultural dialogue in their programmes and activities for the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts, taking into account the need to mainstream gender and youth in those activities;

24. Recommend the establishment of interfaith councils comprised of women, men and young people across all countries of the continent and the diaspora;

25. Decide to establish, in order to ensure the effective implementation of the recommendations of the Symposium, a follow-up mechanism with the support of the Government of Benin, ECOWAS, the African Union, the United Nations and key partners committed to providing practical support to the African Initiative on Education for Peace and Development through Interfaith and Intercultural Dialogue.

Cotonou, 28 May 2015

The Symposium